

LIFE'S LIKE THAT

By FRED NEHER



"It isn't that I don't want you thinner... I can't stand YOUR moaning!"

TV CANDIDS  
by  
Terrence O'Flaherty

It is report-card time down in Hollywood, and the producers of the new and untried shows have been biting their nails to the quick. One report card I was most interested in was "It's a Man's World," which has been teetering on the edge of cancellation.

Recently the show's producers, Peter Tewksbury and Jim Leighton, had lunch with the sponsors and network people and promised to call me if there was news.

There was—and it's good. The program has been extended to 39 episodes which will complete the season. Summer reruns will number 13, and if the show is "established" by then, it will continue next fall.

In many respects, this confidence expressed by the NBC network as well as the sponsors (with the exception of Proctor and Gamble) is a clear victory for quality—the first this season. Readers of this column submitted an unprecedented number of intelligent letters, which were forwarded to the producers.

When they called, Tewksbury and Leighton had just finished shooting their 19th show, which was the last one the network had bargained for.

"I've never seen a cast that worked better together," said Tewksbury.

One of the many letters I received and forwarded to NBC was from a woman who wrote:

"Our family feels by now that Wes and Irene actually live somewhere near by and that if we were to pick up the phone, we could have Howie up for dinner..."

Commenting on this, Tewksbury said: "When we selected the cast we looked for two things: We wanted stage-trained actors. I never saw anybody who was trained to act in the movies. And we wanted actors who had a storehouse of their own personality that the writers could work with and bring out."

This attitude is so rare as to be revolutionary. Mort Werner, NBC's vice president in charge of programming, made this statement—and in many ways it is typical of the cautious enthusiasm (or enthusiastic caution) of broadcasting executives who are caught between sponsors and critics, and who wish to thrive without appearing to bruise either faction:

"While not particularly pleased about the audience reach of the show, we're more than delighted with its quality and critical acclaim. We will stay with this show."

And, incidentally, that audience NBC is "not particularly pleased about" is an estimated seven million homes per week, reaching perhaps 20 million people.

A junior high school girl drew up a petition and got more than 100 signatures from classmates protesting the cancellation of "It's a Man's World" (and also "Fair Exchange," another well-written new show which is renewed until January).

Tewksbury commented: "Young people are quick to see that most TV shows about their generation are not honest reflections. We try to show young Americans as they really are."

One mother wrote about the cast: "They are not sophisticated and not always articulate, but they are made up of such warm and human substance that they should be welcome in any home. My two boys are of the impressionable age and therefore their viewing is strictly censored. But "It's a Man's World" is required viewing since it shows decent thoughts, and trying to live a decent life."

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